Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURNS. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

### TRIBUTE TO U.S. ARMY STAFF SERGEANT HAROLD ''GEORGE'' BENNETT

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President. I rise today to honor the memory of U.S. Army SSG Harold ''George'' Bennett. In the jungles of Vietnam, this young Arkansan displayed courage and honor while serving his Nation in uniform. Tragically, almost 40 years to the day, on or about June 26, 1965, he became the first American prisoner of war executed by the Viet Cong.

George Bennett was born on October 16, 1940, in Perryville, AR, a small town that rests just northwest of Little Rock in the foothills of the Ozarks. His father, Gordon, was a veteran of World War I, and he instilled in his sons the values and rewards of service to country. All 4 would follow his footsteps into the U.S. Army.

SGT George Bennett was trained in the Army as an airborne infantryman and served with the famed 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, made up of some of the finest soldiers in the world. He earned his Master Parachute Wings and Expert Infantry Badge before volunteering in 1964 for service in what was a relatively unknown area of southeast Asia called Vietnam. While deployed, Sergeant Bennett served as an infantry advisor to the 33rd Ranger Battalion, one of South Vietnam's best trained and toughest units. On December 29, 1964, they were airlifted to the village of Binh Gia after it had been overrun by a division of Viet Cong. Immediately upon landing, Sergeant Bennett's unit was confronted by a well-dug-in regiment of enemy forces and despite fighting furiously and courageously throughout the afternoon, their unit was decimated and overrun. Sergeant Bennett and his radio operator, PFC Charles Crafts, fell into the hands of the Viet Cong.

Before being captured, Sergeant Bennett twice called off American helicopter pilots who were attempting to navigate through the combat zone to rescue him and his radioman. Displaying a remarkably calm demeanor, his focus seemed to be on their safety and not his own. His last words to his would-be rescuers were, ''Well, they are here now. My little people,'' his term for the South Vietnamese soldiers under his command, ''are laying down their weapons and they want me to turn off my radio. Thanks a lot for your help and God Bless you.''

As a prisoner of war, the only thing more remarkable than the courageous resistance he displayed throughout his captivity was his steadfast devotion to duty, honor, and country. His faith in God and the trust of his fellow prisoners was unshakable. Sadly, the only way his captors could break his spirit of resistance was to execute him and today Sergeant Bennett lies in an unmarked grave known only to God, somewhere in the jungles of Vietnam.

Recent efforts by a group of Vietnam veterans will ensure that Sergeant Bennett's valiant service will not be forgotten. Over the years, they have worked tirelessly on behalf of the Bennett family to secure the valor awards that should have been presented to Sergeant Bennett's mother, Pauline, in 1965. I am proud of all they have accomplished and have pledged my support to this effort. Most recently, their work helped lead to Sergeant Bennett's posthumous induction into the U.S. Army Ranger Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, GA, on July 8, 2004. Sergeant Bennett's brother Dicky, and his sisters, Eloise Wallace, Laura Sue Vaught, and Peggy Williams were in attendance. I hope this long overdue moment of recognition provided some sense of solace for his family. Although he may no longer be with us, the example and selflessness of this brave young Arkansan will forever live on in our hearts.

The 40th anniversary of Sergeant Bennett's execution offers us an opportunity, not to remember the events of his death, but to reflect upon the life he led and the kind of person he was. He was a selfless young man who answered his Nation's call to service and placed duty and honor above all else. While a grateful nation could never adequately express their debt to men such as George Bennett, it should take every opportunity to honor them and their families for the sacrifice they have paid on our behalf.

I would also like to ask for unanimous consent to include in the record the citation from Sergeant Bennett's posthumous induction into the Ranger Hall of Fame and an article titled ''Bad Day at Binh Gia,'' by retired Army COL Douglas E. Moore, that provides us additional insight into the heroic service of SGT George Bennett.

BAD DAY AT BINH GIA

(By Col. Douglas E. Moore)

When friends or family visit for the first time, we usually take them to Washington to see the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Although I have been there many times, I am still impressed with the large crowds. Most are tourists with cameras at the ready; others appear to be more somber, perhaps because they served in Vietnam themselves or lost friends or family in the war. It troubles me to see fellow veterans there wearing all sorts of military attire from that era. Many of them have pain written across their faces, which makes me wonder what terrible burdens they carry after all these years.

For me, Vietnam is now a collection of mostly good memories. As a young medevac helicopter pilot, I had the opportunity to sharpen my flying skills to a level that was never matched again. I was blessed to be able to work with some of the finest people I have ever known, and my job was satisfying. During my tours in Vietnam and Japan, I evacuated more than 11,000 casualties in one of the best flying machines ever built, the Huey helicopter. It is gratifying to know that some patients lived because we were able to help.

The bad memories have mostly faded with time. In fact, there is only one event that I still think about, and it occurred more than 34 years ago. In late December 1964, we were rushing to join the crews of two helicopter gunships in an attempt to save an American advisor. Unfortunately, we failed.

Vietnam in 1964 was as different as night and day from the later years. Back then, it was still a Vietnamese war, and there were only about 20,000 Americans assigned to the various headquarters, advisory teams and a handful of aviation units scattered around the countryside.

Ours was strictly an advisory and support role and not one of direct combat. In fact, some of the senior officers still had their families in Saigon, and many Americans lived in hotels and other civilian buildings. The old-timers may recall a memo published by one headquarters stating its concern that some living areas were taking on the appearance of armed camps.

We operated on a shoestring. We did not have U.S. Air Force aircraft or U.S. Army artillery to prestrike the landing zones in support of our operations. The only firepower available was a few lightly armed helicopter gunships flown by a group of extraordinarily brave pilots. Needless to say, we left several of the landing zones littered with downed helicopters.

The communication systems were terrible. Since most medevac requests came by telephone and passed through several Vietnamese headquarters before reaching us, delays were common. On occasion, we would rush to a tiny village located a hundred miles away only to discover the casualties had been picked up a day or so earlier by a resupply aircraft making its weekly rounds.

All new pilots found it disconcerting that they could easily lose radio contact with other Americans during the longer flights. Weather permitting, the only alternative was to gain enough altitude to talk to our old standbys, Paris Control and Paddy Control, operated by the Air Force out of Saigon and Can Tho, respectively. Otherwise, we were completely on our own at times.

The character of the war was different, too. While there were a few major battles between the Viet Cong and South Vietnamese, most of the contact was on a small scale and ended quickly. It does not seem possible now, but the number of Americans killed in the war had not reached 200 until July 1964.

In late October, I was flying past Bien Hoa Air Base when several B–57 Canberra bombers suddenly broke through the clouds ahead of me. Several days later, I learned they had come from Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines to attack Viet Cong strongholds in the jungles north of Saigon.